



# NEWS RELEASE

**Date:** April 2, 2015  
**District:** Headquarters  
**Contact:** Tamie McGowen  
**Phone:** (916) 657-5060

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Caltrans Continues Pursuing 50 Percent Water Reduction, Backs Irrigation Limits**

SACRAMENTO—Caltrans today announced that the California Transportation Commission has allocated emergency funding to continue installing smart sprinklers on state property, technology that automatically adjusts to weather conditions, soil moisture or broken pipes, and has already helped cut water use 50 percent where installed.

“Caltrans districts have significantly curbed irrigation, modernized equipment and halted many landscaping projects across California,” said Caltrans Director Malcolm Dougherty. “These efforts have saved billions of gallons of water, but as this State of Emergency continues in California we must work even harder—and keep leading the way on this critical issue.”

As one of the State’s largest departments, responsible for landscaping that stretches the size of 22,600 football fields, Caltrans’ conservation efforts contribute significant water savings. Conservation efforts, including the following, have helped the department reduce water consumption by an estimated 30 percent:

- Invested \$47 million in Caltrans emergency funding to upgrade or repair 1,250 irrigation systems statewide—approximately 25 percent of the state’s system—including smart sprinklers that cut water use at least 50 percent by automatically adjusting water usage based on weather conditions, soil moisture or broken pipes.
- Postponed 34 landscaping projects, which include 26 projects that would have gotten underway this year.
- Invested \$8 million in four major water recycling projects in San Luis Obispo, Shasta and San Diego.
- Canceled any turf or grass watering, including all state rest stops, unless recycled water is used.

Caltrans has shut off irrigation entirely in areas of the state with the most severe drought conditions, and will continue to do so. Any essential landscaping to prevent water pollution or erosion uses only inert ground covers, such as mulch or gravel, or drought-

tolerant native or non-thirsty plants. Caltrans has received nearly \$1 million in local water conservation rebates for its efforts to reduce water use and upgrade equipment.

Meanwhile, Caltrans is continuing to pursue its goal of reaching a 50 percent statewide cut in water use. Last week, Caltrans partnered with the California Transportation Commission to authorize an additional \$28 million in emergency funding to update more irrigation systems with smart sprinklers—which are proven technology shown to cut water use at least 50 percent where installed. As these new systems continue to come online, Caltrans will strengthen conservation training for all department water managers and landscape architects.

“The California Transportation Commission is supporting these investments in water-saving technology because every drop of water matters during this emergency drought,” said Commission Chair Lucy Dunn.

In a further response to the official Continued State of Emergency in California due to the severe drought, Caltrans will also be posting the following message on hundreds of electronic highway signs across the state:

**SEVERE DROUGHT!  
LIMIT OUTDOOR  
WATERING**

These electronic highway message signs will be activated so long as there is no highway emergency, traffic safety message or Amber Alert.

Caltrans asks motorists to report any water waste along its 50,000 lane miles of state highway, such as broken water pipes or leaking irrigation systems, by going to the Caltrans website, [www.dot.ca.gov/](http://www.dot.ca.gov/) and clicking the “Be A Water Watcher” icon to submit a maintenance service request.

“This summer is likely to be severely harsh so the state is taking action by halting irrigation altogether or drastically cutting consumption while keeping plants alive when necessary to curb water pollution and erosion,” said Dougherty. “The department is taking these steps—and is planning more—because the historic drought threatens all Californians with a critically dry summer, and protecting the public and water supply is a top priority.”

Californians can learn more ways to help cut water use during California’s Continued State of Emergency by visiting: [www.saveourwater.com](http://www.saveourwater.com).

# NEWS RELEASE



This Caltrans message board along Interstate 5 in Sacramento was activated earlier today to remind motorists “Severe Drought! Limit Outdoor Watering.” Caltrans is displaying this important message on more than 700 electronic message boards across the state to support Governor Brown’s call for mandatory water use reductions. *Photo courtesy of Caltrans.*

# # #